

Downtown bar attracts crowds to theme nights

John Henry's events are just as varied as its decor; it has everything from burlesque shows to '80s night

BY RYAN NYBURG
PULSE EDITOR

One of the most noticeable things about John Henry's is that it doesn't look like it belongs in the middle of downtown Eugene. This is one of its most appealing attributes. The dimly lit bar bleeds atmosphere all over and, despite the fact that the current location opened after the indoor smoking ban took effect, still smells like stale cigarettes and cheap booze. (It's a smell that never goes away. It infects the furniture. In thirty years, the place will probably still smell like the Marlboro Man just finished a three-day-long hoe-down.) The decor is concert posters, road signs, T-shirts with naughty words on them and abstract art. No, I'm not kidding.

There are really only a few things you need to know about John Henry's: It has Pabst on tap (ah, Oregon, my Oregon), free pool most nights and plays lots of hard-edged rock 'n' roll (ladies and gentlemen, The Cramps!). I realize this might make the place sound like a dingy biker bar, but there is balance. Its theme nights are some of the best times to be had in Eugene, some of the coolest rock acts in town play and the booze selection is large enough to meet the needs of any member of the community's population of social and/or

problem drinkers.

According to the staff, the bar's biggest draws are the theme nights, particularly '80s Night every Thursday, which packs the crowd to the rafters (all the more impressive in as much as the building does not, in fact, have rafters). Not to be overlooked is the Sunday night Broadway Revue, which is like a strip show, only more fun and without the pathetic mix of pity and guilt.

"One of the best things about this place is that there is always something different going on," head of security Jason Cronk said. "But it's not a scenesters club."

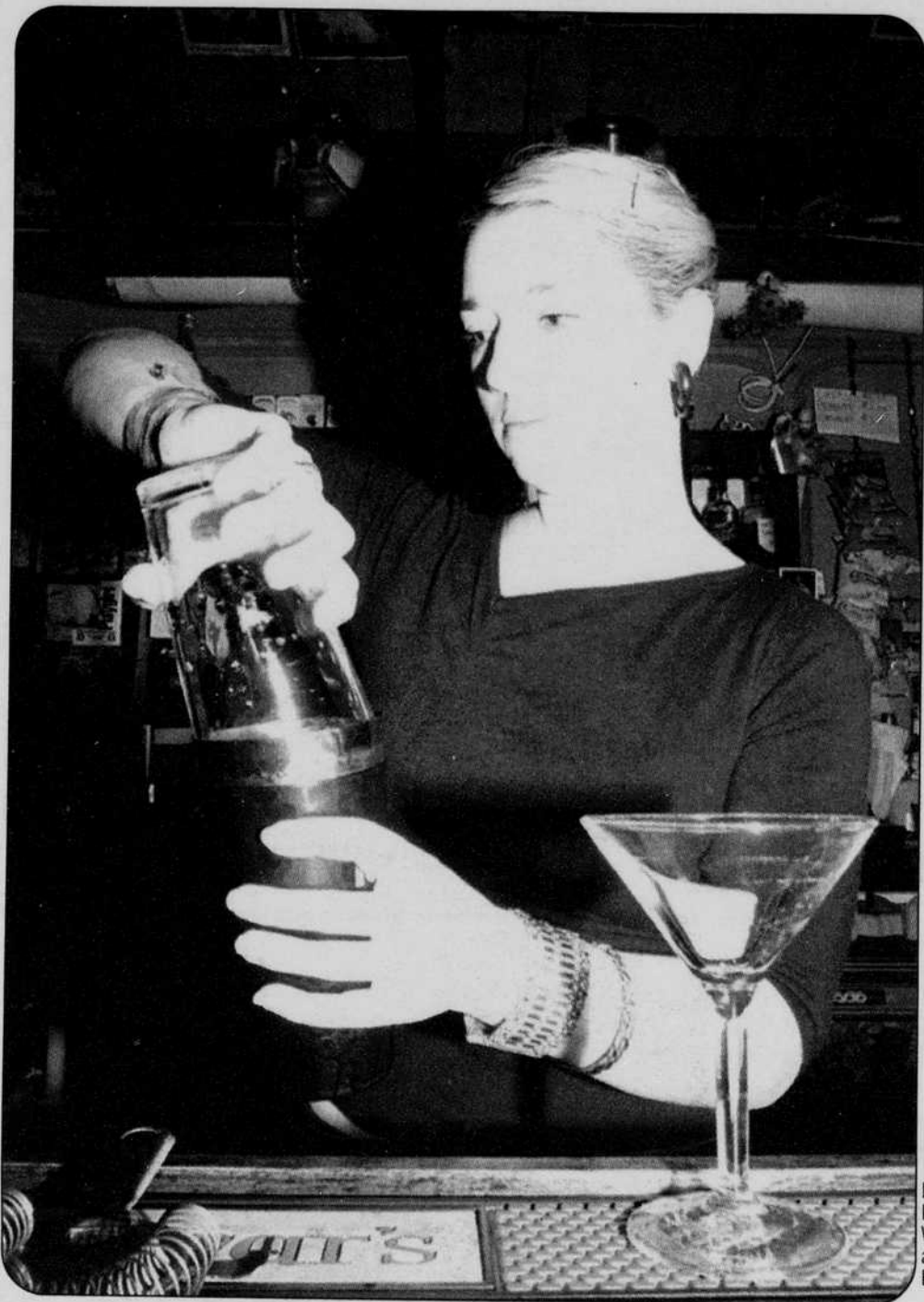
The bar itself has undergone a wide variety of changes. Opening in 1992 at a West 11th location, the place was practically built by Eugene's underground music scene and spent much of its time supporting a wide array of comically named punk bands throughout the 1990s (personal favorite: Portland's The Sweaty Nipples). By the end of the decade, St. Vincent de Paul's took over the property and decided to build low-cost housing on the site (weak!), and John Henry's moved to its current Broadway location.

"I've got my name carved in the concrete outside of this place," Cronk said. "I helped build this place."

JOHN HENRY'S, page 9

MORE INFORMATION

What: John Henry's
Where: 77 W. Broadway
Online: www.johnhenryclub.com



Bartender Molly McKeown pours a Washington Apple at John Henry's on Broadway.

TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

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